1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

Roussel (190, p. 426) states that a census taken between 1867 and 1870 showed a total population of 650. He believes that the population was never more than 5,000 or 6,000 because the interior of the island was never inhabited.

In 1869 Powell (180, p. 142) estimated the population at 800, and Palmer (169, p. 372) at 900 of whom one third were women.

In 1870 Gana (86) reported the population at about 600.

The disproportion of the sexes in the last half of the nineteenth century is not exaggerated. Roussel, who knew the island well, states that formerly the number of women exceeded the number of men but that women seemed more susceptible to smallpox and tuberculosis and that "out of three dead two are females." That this disproportion was abnormal is proved by native testimony and the present balance between male and female birth rates. Geiseler (87, p. 22) attributes the disproportion and the falling birth rate to the past, for he had heard that long before white contact there was but one woman to every five men. Disease may have been introduced by infrequent visits of whalers who before 1830 had contaminated the island with syphilis (162, p. 26).

The smallpox epidemic apparently ceased after the arrival of the missionaries, but mortality was still high and the population continued to diminish. Roussel (190, p. 427) gives a reason for this that is worth considering:

I know of no other reason for the decrease of the population other than deprivations of all sorts, the humidity of the huts, the bad air of the winter season, their immorality and their extreme imprudence in living with sick people. To frighten them with the threat of death is just useless. They do not care for life. They fear death as little as they like their relatives. As long as they hope to save a sick person they take care of him, but if the disease becomes serious, they abandon him and pay no attention to his requests or wants.

As a matter of fact the only disease on Rapa-nui is scrofula, but it seems to be very different from the ordinary kind. They suffer from dysentery, but so rarely that it is not dangerous. We had only two cases of tetanus and they were fatal, one case of apoplexy and one of cerebral congestion.

Bates (86, p. 51), the surgeon of the *O'Higgins* who visited the island in 1870, attributes the great mortality of the population to scrofula and consumption. He considers that premature marriages affected the birth rate. It is hard to tell exactly what he means by "scrofula" which he says was common among children, whereas adults died of "pulmonary ailments."

The lack of hygiene and the free sexual life of the girls cannot be considered as serious factors in the depopulation. Smallpox probably made the greatest ravages among young people, so that there is nothing surprising in the continued decrease in birth rate even after the epidemics were over. In addition to the other calamities war broke out among the islanders and was followed by a period of famine. In 1866, Ollivier (165, vol. 39, p. 257) wrote that the mortality caused by misery and famine was very high and that the missionaries had to take care of a great many orphans.

2:Ferdon A-5 (1956) 1957
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

DIVORCE

Island marriage appears to be a firmer institution today than it was in the not-too-distant past. This is in part due to Chilean governmental authority backing the church in its taboo against divorce. When divorces do occur, they tend to follow the early Polynesian custom of an unceremonious departure of one of the mates. Owing to the island's government frowning upon such action, and its active interest in making the natives understand that the question of divorce is a legal matter, the Easter Islander's attitude toward divorce is at present in a state of flux.

Jorge Tepano reflected the church and governmental attitude when, in discussing the problem, he took the firm stand that divorce could only be obtained on the basis of adultery and that it was for the governor, in his capacity of judge, to determine who was the guilty party and to make a property settlement on the basis of existing Chilean laws. However, this strongly acculturated view is not necessarily adhered to most commonly. Governor Curti informed me of the marriage of a forty-five year old native to a girl of seventeen. This man built a home alongside that of the girl's parents in an effort to make her comfortable, but the girl refused to live with him in the new house. Becoming angry, he tore the house down and put it up on his own parcel of land, demanding that the girl come to live with him. She again refused, and the matter was taken before the governor. There apparently is no law that specifically demands that a wife live with her husband or, if it exists, it is unenforceable on the island. After various attempts at persuasion, the governor used his prerogative of turning over the woman's ration allowance of foods and dry goods to her husband, but when I left the island this action had had no effect upon the woman, her own family having taken up the burden of supporting her. Officially, as long as the girl did not legally marry again, her action could only be looked upon as a separation, though in native eyes it constitutes a divorce in the old style and is accepted as such. Whereas marriages solemnized by civil and religious ceremonies run into legal difficulties in the event of a divorce, common law marriages appear not to have this difficulty, in spite of the fact that, though legally not recognized, they are tacitly accepted officially to the extent that in the island's rationing lists such illegal matches are listed as family units.

DEATH

The Easter Islander appears to have no personal fear of death and, for the most part, looks upon it from a rather fatalistic point of view. A notable exception to this is seen in his superstitious attitude toward Rongo Rongo caves, whose

2:Ferdon A-5 (1956) 1957
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

761 tablets are guarded by "devils" that will, in extreme cases, kill a man who stumbles
[776 upon such a cave and steals one of the tablets.

177 I had no time nor opportunity to delve into any beliefs that might exist regard-
775 ing what happens to a person after death, but I suspect that here the church has
764 made deep inroads, for the dead are now given the last rites of the church and then buried in a Catholic cemetery.

177 Immediately upon the death of an individual a certain amount of grief will be
764 shown by the immediate kin, but this appears to be more the result of natural
797 shock than of any culturally determined mourning pattern. Between the time of death and the holding of last rites, the body is kept on view in the victim's house, after which it is carried in its coffin to the church where the last rites are administered by the island's priest. As the body is carried from the church to the cemetery
(533) the cortege breaks into song. Some of these are of the slow, religious type, but many have an almost gay lilt. During and after the church services there is no overt expression of mourning on the part of the nearest kin, but as the casket is lowered into the ground a near-hysteria of grief breaks out among the closest relatives of the deceased and is explained by my informants on the basis that this is the final separation from a beloved one.

174 Since, as appears to be the case, the strongest impact of death comes with the
177 physical parting of the dead from the living, one cannot help but wonder if this
764 final show of extreme mourning is a direct result of the more abrupt practices of Christian religion rather than an Easter Island trait of long standing. It was not, after all, many years ago that burial exposure was practiced: by this method, at least the fleshy parts of the body disappear slowly over a length of time — it is only after the bones are left that final burial takes place in a tomb, usually a surface stone structure or a vault within the platform of an *ahu*. The change from a long drawn out physical relationship with the body to a sudden disappearance of a body in a pit, and the change from customary surface burial to sub-surface interment must have required considerable psychological adjustment. Today's overt manifestation of extreme grief as the body is lowered into the ground may, therefore, indicate that this adjustment to a new burial practice is not complete. On the other hand it may, perhaps, reflect a mourning pattern formerly used when the fleshless bones were given their final resting place.

765 During the evening of the day of burial the family of the deceased gives a large *umu* feast, often including music and dancing, for all visitors. At this time there are certain taboos with regard to the eating of the *umu* food by the immediate family. Thus, if a father dies neither his brothers and sisters, his children, nor his wife may partake of the food thus prepared. If a child has died neither